



# A Parent's Guide to Competitive Swimming



The following is intended as a guide for parents of children who have just joined Bury and Elton Swimming Club (B&E).

There is more detailed information available on the ASA website.

<http://www.swimming.org/asa/>

## **ASA Swimmers Classification**

In swimming there are three Classification groups

### **Cat 1**

This classification is basically for young new swimmers who are starting off in swimming and have just joined the club in the junior group. This provides insurance whilst the swimmer is at training and at some low level (level 4) galas.

The Cat 1 ASA membership fee is included in the annual club membership fee.

### **Cat 2**

This classification is for the more competitive swimmer who is selected to swim for the club in Central Lancashire league galas or who wish to enter licensed swim meets like the Manchester and District Age Group galas, Bolton Metro or City of Salford open meets. Swimmers also need to be registered as Cat 2 to compete in Lancashire County and North West region meets.

Your child's coach will advise if your child needs to be registered as Cat 2 with the ASA.

There is an additional fee payable with annual club membership for swimmers that need to be registered as Cat 2. This covers registration January to December but fees are collected with the annual membership fees in March.

### **Cat 3**

This classification is for all volunteers with the club.

## Galas

There are two different Types of Swimming Galas in which Bury and Elton compete:

- Galas where the club competes as a team against other clubs in Leagues or friendly Galas.
- Galas where the swimmer competes individually in licensed meets.

## Team Galas

B&E competes in the Central Lancashire and the Manchester and District leagues.

B&E have a long history of competing in the Central Lancashire leagues. The leagues can be very competitive and the club tries to swim its strongest team. It's always a difficult decision to leave out swimmers but parents must trust the judgement of its coaching staff in doing this.

More details on the Central Lancashire Leagues can be found on the Association website:

<http://www.centrallancs.org.uk/>

B&E have in recent years also entered the Manchester and District leagues. The main purpose of these galas is to give young inexperienced swimmers a taste of competition.

More details on the Manchester and District Leagues can be found on the Association website:

<http://www.mdsdpa.org.uk/>



## Licensed Galas/Open Meets

Licensed galas are those galas where the competitor is swimming for themselves to gain times and sometimes medals! The club will target some local meets of this type, suggesting to suitable swimmers that they enter. In these cases all entry forms and fees should be made via the club. Details of these galas will be made available via the club notice board and coaches. The club will process the applications and will support the swimmers with poolside volunteers.

Swimmers can enter other Open meet galas if they choose to but the club will not be able to support them by sending a volunteer.

### Licensing

Meets do not have to be licensed, but where they are specific ASA guidelines must be followed. Licensed meets are graded level 1-4. Electronic timing must be used on level 1-3 meets. Results from these are submitted to the ASA for inclusion on the National Rankings database <https://www.swimmingresults.org/>

**Level One Meets are intended for qualifying for National Championships.**

Minimum entry times apply. Pools must be either 25m or 50m long

**Level Two Meets are intended for qualifying for Regional Championships.**

Qualifying Times and Upper Limit times apply. Pools must be 25m or 50m long

**Level Three Meets are intended for qualifying for County Championships,**

Qualifying Times and Upper Limit times apply. Pools must be 25m, 33m or 50m long.

**Level Four Meets are intended for swimmers beginning to enter individual open competition**

Qualifying Times sometimes apply. Upper Limit times usually apply.

Pools must be at least 25m long

More details can be found on the ASA website under Swimming Calendar and Competition information.

[https://www.swimmingresults.org/licensed\\_meets](https://www.swimmingresults.org/licensed_meets)

When you look at the details for an open gala they often state that they are Level 3, Level 2 etc. The Level indicates the standard of the meet, what the times can be used for in the future and what level of officials are used. Also higher level galas are more competitive – level 1 being the top galas . To qualify for county championships it is usually initially stated that qualifying times have to be achieved at a Level 3 gala or above. For regional championships qualification has be at Level 2 or above. As a result most level 2 galas have a large number of regional qualifying swimmers taking part. In other words the standard is very high!

For level 1, 2 and 3 meets the swimmer needs to have a Cat 2 Classification.

It is important that parents know about gala entries because there is a cost involved (usually approx. £3 to £5 per event which if 4 events are entered amounts to getting on for £20 per gala) which must be paid with your entry. There is also usually also a charge for parents to watch the Gala.

## **How Does a Team Gala work?**

### **Team Selection**

The Head Coach and the team manager make the selections for the team galas – initially selecting the swimmers with the best times. The club holds 50m timed sprint sessions (Time Trials) throughout the year so that swimmers can test themselves against each other and to see what time they can achieve. This will also help in team selection. The head coach may take into account current swimming performance rather than just the swimmer's personal best time (PB).

Team sheets will be posted on the club notice board. Please remember to check the board and indicate whether or not our child can compete.

## **What to Take to a gala**

A swimmer needs two costumes, two pairs of goggles, two towels (one for poolside so that between the races they can get dry and stay warm), and two hats, they will also need plenty drinks and possibly some food – they are going to be poolside for about 3 hours so some jelly sweets are also good a good idea. Parents will also need something to drink (and eat) as it is usually very warm and humid at a swimming pool. Dress in such a way that you can cope with very hot conditions.

## **At the Gala**

Once at the gala the swimmers have to go off and change and then have to go poolside by themselves. Parents are not allowed poolside unless they are one of the volunteers helping to manage the team. This can be a bit daunting especially for those younger swimmers in the first couple of galas. There will be coaches and timekeepers from each club on the poolside to make sure that the children are ok and in the right place for each of their races.

What do the parents and supporters do? They get to get to sit poolside and cheer on the swimmers – if you're lucky the pool will have proper tiered spectator seating – otherwise you end up sitting very close to the pool. There is also a small charge for spectators, and maybe a raffle or two to raise funds for the hosting club.

The swimmers need to be poolside in time to participate in the warm up.

## **How Do Open Galas Work?**

### **How to Enter**

The details of Open Galas are posted on the club noticeboard and it is then up to the individual (with the parent's knowledge) to enter if they wish.

The notices contain all the details of the various events including any time qualifications. Some galas specify a band of times that your child's PB should fall between for each event. Some specify a time where your child's PB must be equal to or faster and occasionally a time is specified where the swimmer's time must be slower.

Most galas currently cost around £4 per event.

You can only enter open galas through your swimming club. The meet secretary will collect the forms and submit the entries. When the entries are confirmed the Gala Secretary will publish a list of accepted swimmers.

Sometimes if there are a lot of entries the organisers of the gala may not allow you all the swims that you requested.

Please ensure that Entries are handed to your child's coach or gala secretary made before the closing date set by the club and NOT the date on the official forms. Our Gala Secretary needs to have some time to input all the requests and times before the official closing date.

## **Going to the Gala**

It's usually advisable to aim to get to an open gala about half an hour before the posted warm up time. This gives you time to park (some venues do not have very good parking, especially when 200 children with parent's descend on them) and may get you near enough to the front of the queue to get in and get a seat!! Take lots to drink – it's very hot in most swimming pools.

## **What to Take**

For the swimmers make sure they have plenty to eat and especially to drink. Also, they need clothing to put on between races and between sessions if you are attending more than one session.

## **At the Gala**

When they arrive the swimmer must report to poolside where the club volunteer will register their attendance. Don't be late otherwise the swimmer may be excluded from their events.

Like team events parents are not allowed poolside – one or two people will have been nominated as coaches by the club and they will look after the swimmers while they are poolside. The swimmers have to go off and change by themselves.

## **The Swimming**

Most open galas are split into 2 or more sessions (usually AM and PM) with a separate warm up for each session.

The warm up takes about an hour with the children split into older/younger boys and girls. Then it is into the races.

At most open galas each event is ranked in the order of the swimmer's entry time (their PB may have changed since the entry was made). The event is then swum in heats starting with the slowest times irrespective of age. As a result it is unlikely that a swimmer will be completely outclassed (or completely out class the other swimmers) in their particular heat.

Once the event is complete the recorded times are sorted out and the swimmers sorted into their age groups and the results posted – at which point you find out whether you have a medal winner.

Trophies/medals are awarded for anywhere between the top 3 and top six in each of the age groups. It varies with the gala as does the age groups.

So at the end of a great days competition (lasting around 7 hours) you set off home having watched your swimmer competing for all of about 5 minutes (depending on the number of events) but hopefully clutching some medals and having recorded one or more PB's

## **P.B.s**

PB means Personal Best. There is a bit of an obsession with PB's, you will begin to get obsessed if your child is a keen swimmer!

The ASA also holds a database of all official times recorded at licensed open galas. These are the times needed for most meet entries.

Once your child has recorded some times at a licensed gala you can go to the ASA web site to see where your child is ranked at county, regional and national level.

<https://www.swimmingresults.org/>